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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of black women rising to administrative leadership positions in higher education. The presentation presents demographic data on black females in higher education in Maryland and shows that there are documented sexual and racial barriers which prevent the black female from obtaining top leadership roles in higher education. Data are provided from a survey, conducted in April 1991, of 32 randomly selected African-American women (total sample size of 106) on the campus of Bowie State University (Maryland.) The survey inquired about the role of the institution in promoting the ascension of African-American women through various levels of the institution's organizational structure. The findings show that many of the respondents believe politics, friendships, the network system, and other factors outweigh qualifications of education and experience in determining whether job/position advancement occurs at Bowie State University. Additionally, although most respondents clearly state the desire to advance and have prepared for it (many achieved degrees while at Bowie State), most are not job hunting; reasons for this are not known. Contains 43 references. (GLR)

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The Fourth National Conference: "African Americans in Higher Education"

University of Maryland at College Park

April 19, 1991

Conference Theme:

"African-American in Higher Education
Linking Our Past, Present, and Future"

Presentation:

"The Cinderella Concept of the Black Female in Higher Education"

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Although history has documented many of the achievements of Black women in the educational arena, the real picture reveals that in many instances the gains and successes have been tenuous and superficial. The Black woman's plight is cast in a glass slipper. She is allowed to wear and to bear the fruits of success up to a point. If she goes beyond the predetermined point in her career and strives for higher goals, she will be brought back to reality at the stroke of midnight.

History reveals that the Black female has pioneered and forged new frontiers in education as a leader and as a participant. This was most evident in the 1800's after the right to learn to read and to write was permissible for slaves and ex-slaves. Many of the early primary schools and colleges for

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Blacks were started, supported and presided over by Black females. However, given the approximate 100-150 year existence of the current 117 historically Black colleges and universities in existence today, less than 10% have Black female chief academic officers or presidents. Therein lies the dilemma facing Black females in higher education.

The picture is almost as bleak when we look at other top administrative levels. There is a clear absence of Black female leadership at predominantly White and Black institutions. Current data suggest that Black females are earning degrees at increasing rates when race and sex are considered. Black females are earning baccalaureate and master's degrees comparable to Black males. On the doctoral level, the Black female has just begun to surpass the Black male. However, in terms of leadership roles that require doctorates outside of education, the black male surpasses the Black female.

Black females in higher education are permitted to enjoy and to partake of the fruits of her educational aspirations up to a point. This is the first phase of the cinderella concept: Cinderella enjoyed being at the ball and felt gratitude and awe at the opportunity that had been opened for her to become a part of the "normal society." She was aware that if she stayed beyond midnight, her dreams would dissipate and forces beyond her control would return her to the reality of "her place." Likewise the Black female may enjoy being a faculty member and/or holding lower level traditional administrative positions, but her opportunities for reaching the top are narrow and may not exist in many instances.

The Black female who strives to penetrate the male-dominated bastian of administrative leadership, must endure many obstacles. These obstacles include lower pay than her male counterparts, exclusion from a "good old boys" social network, extra duties and expectations, sexual harassment, etc.

Like Cinderella, Black women need a fairy godmother and a Prince Charming to make the hard work of climbing the higher education administrative ladder pay off. Good mentors, like the fairy godmother, can assist African American women with appropriate experiences to excel. Wicked stepsisters and wicked stepmothers criticize, demean and undermine the African American woman throughout the process. It doesn't matter whether wicked stepsisters and wicked stepmothers are other Black women, White women, White men, Black men or other minorities. The impact of the behavior is to "keep Black women in their places". Unfortunately, all too often, when African American women do succeed, they elevate and support other groups rather than other Black women. The hate and self hate cycles are so insidious that they are almost undetected. The false sense of the accomplishments of Black women, juxtaposed next to the accomplishments of Black men indicate slightly higher employment statistics in predominantly White institutions at the faculty level. However, the statistics don't lend themselves to the myth of the Black superwoman over the "endangered species" label for the Black male. The data suggests the need for special programs and support mechanisms for Black women. Like Cinderella, Black women need access to the best fitting glass slipper. Like Cinderella, Black women who gain access, handle the fragile glass

slipper with care. But that caution not to chip or break the glass slipper must be reexamined to determine the effects of fear on choices for critical jobs, mentoring experiences and promotional opportunities. When Cinderella can look at her dark complexion with pride and find the beauty and worth in her appearance that comes with self love and acceptance, she will turn from Cinderella to a fairy godmother. That transformation is necessary to perpetuate the process.

This presentation presents demographic data on Black females in higher education in Maryland. The underlying focus will show that there are documented sexual and racial barriers which prevent the Black female from obtaining top leadership roles in higher education. Although there is evidence of progress over a period of time, there is an insidious attempt to limit the Black female's progress above and beyond a certain level. Too often, the Black female is led to live a dream that dissipates at midnight when the facade returns to reality.

Research data includes the results of a survey conducted at Bowie State University. The survey asks Black females about the role of the institution in promoting their ascension through various levels of the organizational structure within the institution.

Historically, the first well known Black woman college founder and president was Mary McLeod Bethune who founded Bethune-Cookman College in Florida in 1904 serving as president from 1904-1942. Most recently, Black women have ascended to college presidencies in private and public two year and five year colleges and universities.

According to the American Council on Education, in 1989 there were twenty (20) African American College Presidents (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

Women Chief Executive Officers
in U.S. Colleges and Universities

Type of Institution	1975	1978	1981	1984	1987	1989
Private	132	146	159	182	182	182
4 - Year	98	114	135	134	156	151
2 - Year	34	32	24	48	28	31
Public	16	31	72	104	112	146
4 - Year	5	9	25	32	39	44
2 - Year	11	22	47	72	73	102
Total	148	177	231	286	296	328

In 1991, the National Association for Educational Opportunity (NAFEO) profiled the African American female college presidents at NAFEO institutions.

Chart 1

Name	Institution
Dr. Johnetta B. Cole	Spelman College
Dr. Dolores E. Cross	Chicago State University
Dr. Majorie Harris	Lewis College of Business
Dr. Sebetha Jenkins	Jarvis Christian College
Dr. Yvonne Kennedy	Bishop State Community College
Dr. Katherine R. Mitchell	Shorter College
Dr. Gloria Randle Scott	Bennett College
Dr. Dolores M.R. Spikes	Southern University
Dr. Niara Sudarkasa	Lincoln University

These women have initiated new programs, raised substantial funds and increased enrollment and retention. However, the profiles do not address the efforts of these women in promoting other Black women as leaders in higher education other than by role model example with the exception of Johnetta B. Cole and Gloria Randle Scott who, as presidents of female institutions, promote career aspirations by definition. Nonetheless, the potential for increasing the numbers of African Americans in higher education is greater, given the leadership roles of these women. Female, as well as male college presidents, need to be more sensitive to the relevant issues in career advancement for women. As geographic mobility is frequently limited, given child care and family concerns, it may be more necessary to favorably review intra-university promotions.

In terms of personnel, in the University of Maryland System, demographics show that African American women are almost as endangered as African American men on predominantly white campuses (see Table 2), especially in faculty positions (see Table 3).

Table 2

Black Males/Females By System and By Institution
Fall 1989

Institution	Black Male	Black Female	Total Personnel
UM System Statewide	1519	2083	21818
Bowie State University	140	171	432
Coppin State College	128	180	358
Frostburg State University	10	16	846
UM Baltimore County	76	93	1440
UM College Park	432	553	9062
UM Eastern Shore	116	121	382
UMUC - Statewide	34	71	1157
Center Env. & Est. St.	3	4	253
Coop Ext. Service	11	76	361
UM System Administration	15	13	342
Salisbury State University	80	77	799
Towson State University	93	95	1915
University of Baltimore	61	80	662
UM at Baltimore	320	533	3809

TABLE 3

Black UMS Personnel By Gender By Occupational Category
Fall 1989

Inst.	Execut.		Faculty		Grad Asst.		Profes.		Cleric.		Techn.		Skill		Serv.	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
UMAB	12	4	37	31	1	4	25	69	22	281	58	41	25	2	140	101
UMBC	5	3	19	13	2	5	13	22	5	47	8	2	8	0	16	1
UMES	16	8	38	26	5	3	14	23	1	49	10	6	11	0	21	6
UMUC	0	1	24	17	0	1	3	11	4	28	0	1	1	0	2	12
SSU	5	2	8	8	0	0	0	1	2	12	0	1	3	0	62	53
TSU	1	1	12	10	1	1	15	16	13	52	4	13	8	0	39	2
UB	3	2	8	2	0	0	3	4	6	36	4	10	1	0	36	26
UMCP	15	13	52	47	47	46	49	59	21	192	32	11	73	4	143	181
BSU	16	13	53	49	0	0	20	16	11	66	13	22	9	1	18	4
CSC	20	14	51	48	0	0	19	32	4	64	13	13	2	0	19	9
FSU	1	4	4	2	0	0	2	5	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	3

A question related to the career advancement of African American women is the perceived campus climate. The following are the findings of a survey of African American women at Bowie State University conducted during April of 1991.

Method

One hundred six (106) surveys were disseminated to randomly selected African American women on the campus. Thirty-two (32) were returned. Table 4 depicts the age ranges of those who returned forms. Most respondents were in the 41-50 years age range. Table 5 depicts the income level and Table 6 depicts the educational level. The average (mode and median) salary range for respondents is $25,001 - $30,000. Of those who indicated educational level, the median and mode of respondents was the Master's degree.

In terms of job classification, nine (9) are classified employees, six (6) are administrators, five (5) are contractual, one (1) is staff, six (6) faculty, two (2) faculty-administrators (department chairpersons) and three "no response".

Table 7 depicts the number of years employed at Bowie. Table 8 depicts the number of years in the same job title. Table 9 depicts the number of promotions. The average number of years at Bowie is 9 - 10 years with most employees clustered as recent hires and those with 21+ years of service. Specifically, the data indicates that ten of the respondents have been at Bowie four years or less. Consequently, most (16) respondents have had the same job titles for the past four years. However, the data

indicates that some respondents who have been at the institution longer have had the same job title over time. Twenty-one (21) respondents had the same job title for the past six years.

In terms of promotions, ten (10) respondents reported no promotions, seven (7) reported one promotion, two (2) reported three promotions, three (3) reported four promotions and three (3) reported four promotions.

Findings

On the issue of furthering their education, all but two (2) of thirty (30) respondents reported furthering their education.

Most (13) pursued college courses only. Two (2) pursued campus based staff training. Two (2) pursued campus based staff training and college courses. Two (2) pursued campus based staff training, off-campus staff training and college courses. Two (2) pursued campus based staff training, off-campus staff training, and convention workshops. Two (2) pursued campus based staff training and convention workshops. Two (2) pursued college courses and convention workshops. One (1) completed campus based staff training, off-campus staff training, convention workshops and summer institutes. Six (6) completed campus based staff training, off-campus staff training, college courses and convention workshops. Three (3) respondents did not answer.

On degrees earned since employed at Bowie, one (1) responded earned an Associate's degree, four (4) respondents earned bachelor's degrees, four (4) respondents earned Master's degrees, four (4) respondents earned doctoral degrees, one (1) earned a B.S. and an M.A., one (1) earned a M.Ed. and an Ed.D., two (2)

earned 40 credits, one (1) completed four courses towards the Master's degree and fourteen (14) did not respond.

On the question on whether this campus encourages women to pursue formal education, fifteen (15) respondents said yes, thirteen (13) respondents said no, one (1) respondent was uncertain and one (1) said "somewhat but not the way it could or should". Two respondents did not answer.

On the question of whether education is related to advancement, nineteen (19) said yes, twelve (12) said no and one (1) was uncertain.

On the question of whether experience is related to advancement, twenty-one (21) said yes, nine (9) said no, one (1) was "uncertain" and one (1) did not answer.

Asked about other factors related to advancement, two (2) indicated "politics" only, eight (8) indicated "network system" only, five (5) indicated "politics", "friendships" and "network system". Six (6) indicated "politics" and "friendships". One (1) indicated "politics" and "network system" and one (1) indicated "friendships" and "network system". One (1) indicated "departmental faculty recommendation". One (1) was "unsure" and seven (7) did not answer. Most of the women who returned forms perceived their supervisors as helping their advancement (21 respondents). Three (3) respondents indicated supervisors hurt their advancement, four (4) indicated supervisors neither helped nor hurt, three (3) did not answer and one (1) felt the question was not applicable.

On the question of whether the supervisor encourages advancement, nineteen (19) indicated their supervisors encourage

their advancement, three (3) indicated the supervisor's discouragement, four (4) said the supervisor neither encourages nor discourages advancement, and six (6) did not answer or indicated the question was not applicable.

Twenty-four (24) of the respondents would use their supervisors as references and seven (7) would not. One respondent did not answer.

Nine (9) respondents are job hunting, twenty-one (21) respondents are not, one (1) is "open and flexible" to other job opportunities and one (1) did not answer.

On the issue of advancement, twenty-three (23) wish to advance, five (5) are satisfied, one (1) is somewhat satisfied, two (2) are satisfied but always looking for advancement. One (1) respondent did not answer.

Conclusions

Most respondents have furthered their education using formal and informal means. College courses for credit were pursued as well as staff training opportunities on and off campus and through convention workshops. Many respondents completed college degrees while at Bowie, indicating a heightened sense of awareness of the importance of formal education. The data suggests that the women who completed degrees while employed here are mostly self starters, since the group was fairly evenly split on views on campus support for women's pursuit of formal education. On this campus, significant numbers of respondents believe that education and experience are not related to advancement. Politics, friendships, network system and other

factors are perceived to outweigh the usual qualifications of education and experience in determining whether job/position advancement occurs at Bowie State University.

Although most respondents clearly state the wish to advance and many have prepared for it, most are not job hunting. This needs to be explored further. Are concerns for the economy preventing women from seeking other career options? Is Bowie believed to be a microcosm of the larger society where advancement is related more to "who" you know than to "what" you know? Is a known environment more comfortable than an unknown environment? Do concerns for racism, ageism and sexism preclude career switches? [Most respondents are older African American women.] Is Bowie perceived to be a good place to work, despite impediments to career advancement? Are friendships forged here more important than money, advancement and recognition? Are women motivated more by factors other than money, compared to men?

More research is needed to explore the career goals, paths to advancement, success formula and motivators for African American women, who despite all odds, achieve. Such study has implications in understanding the African American male who has come to rely on the judgments, perceptions and social supports of African American women.

TABLE 4. Age of Respondents

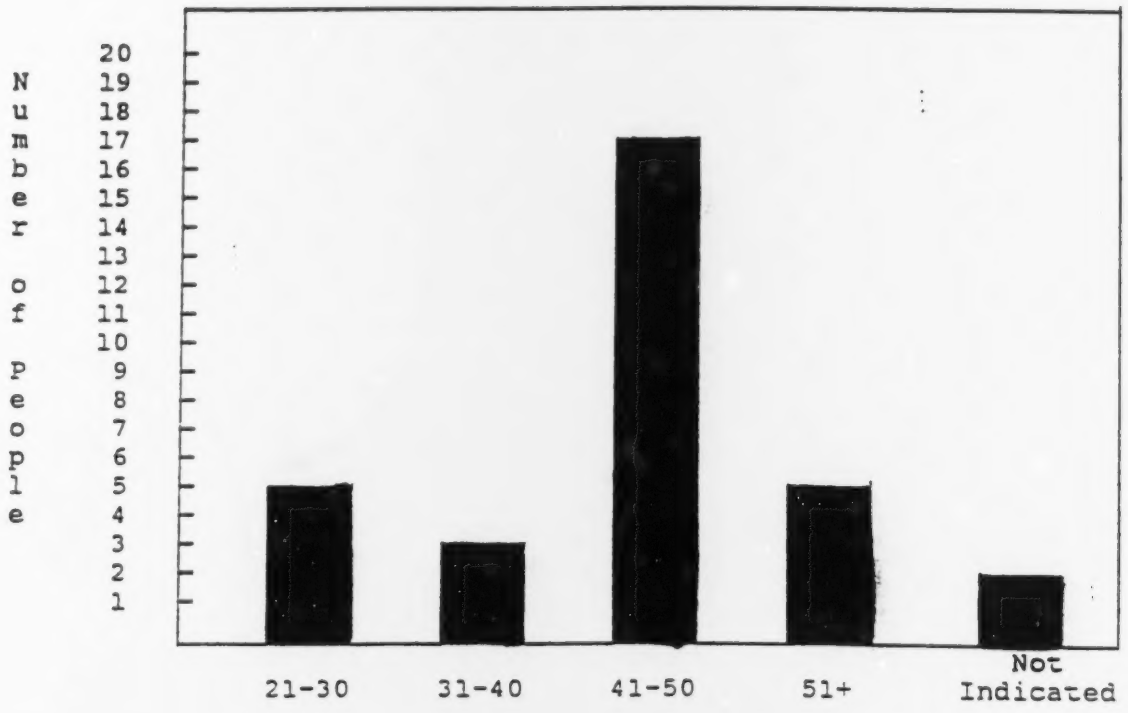


TABLE 5. Income Level

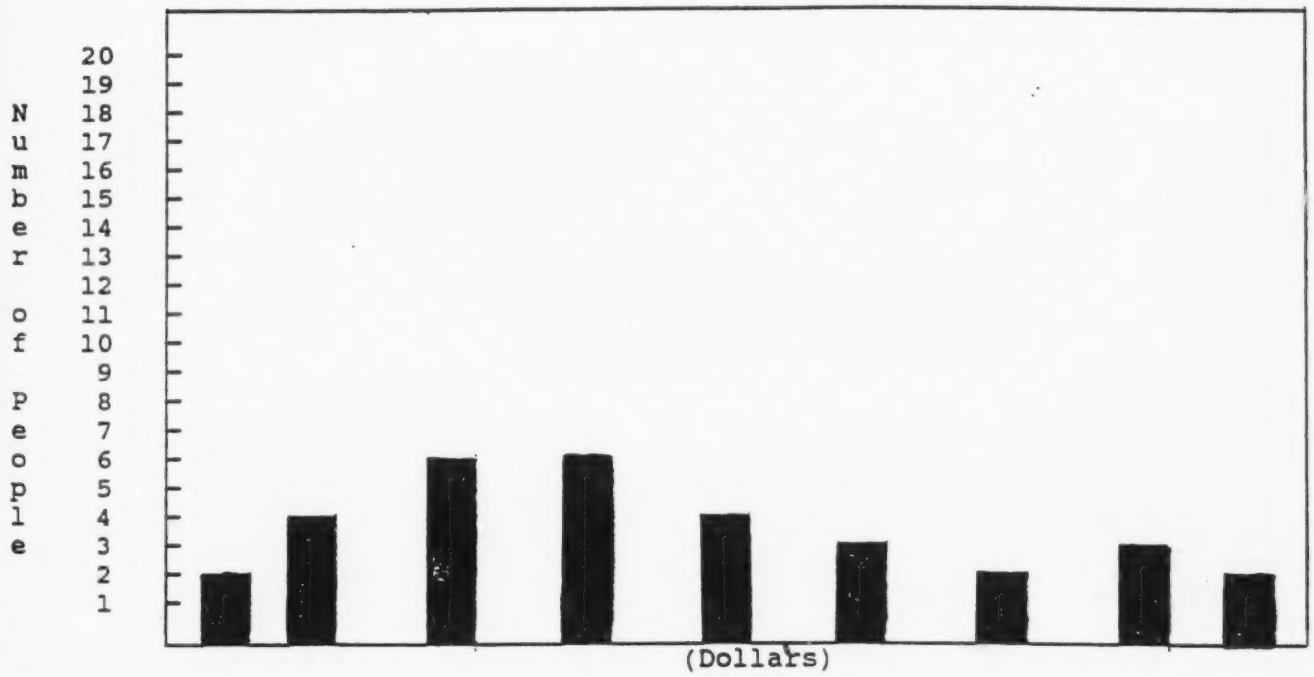


TABLE 6. Educational Attainment

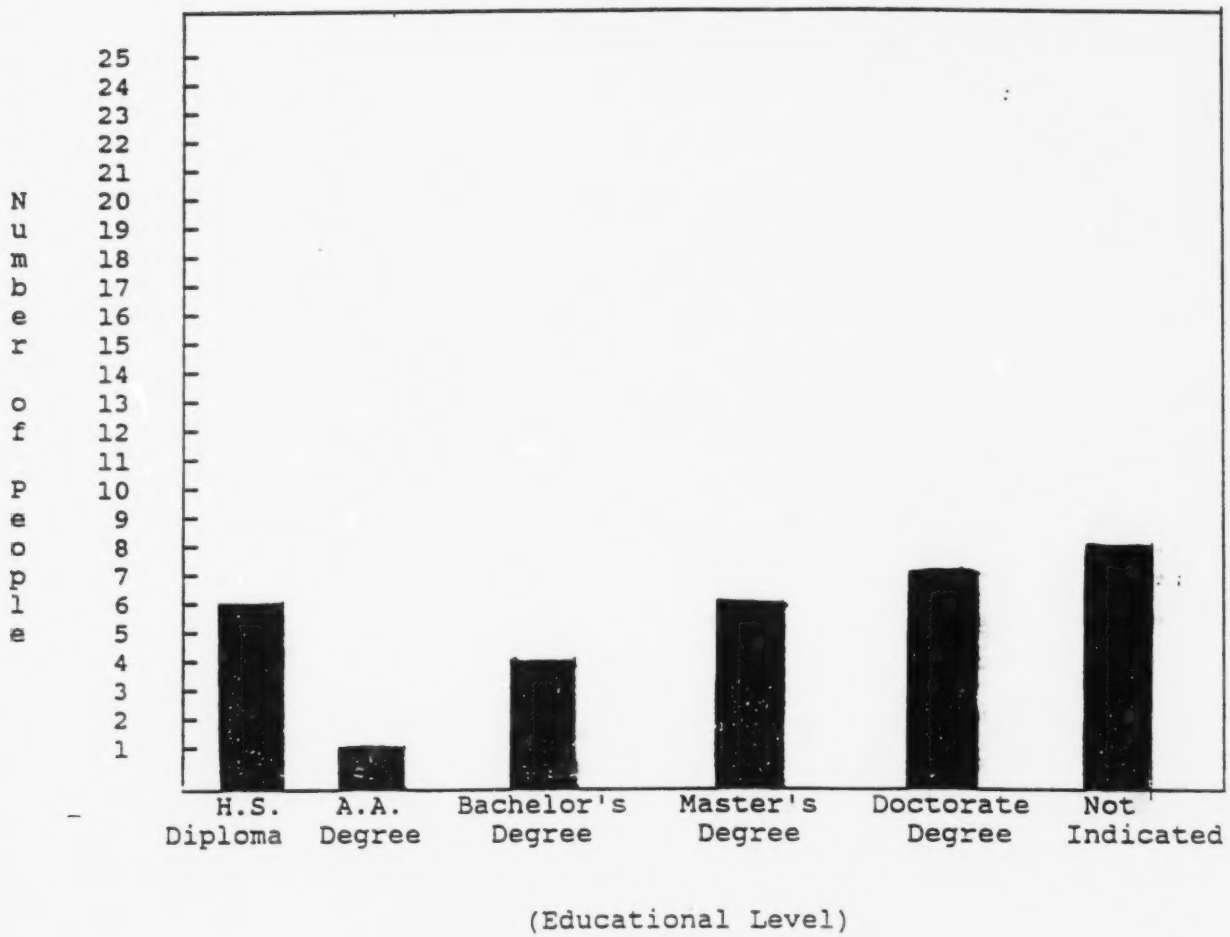


TABLE 7. Years Employed at BSU

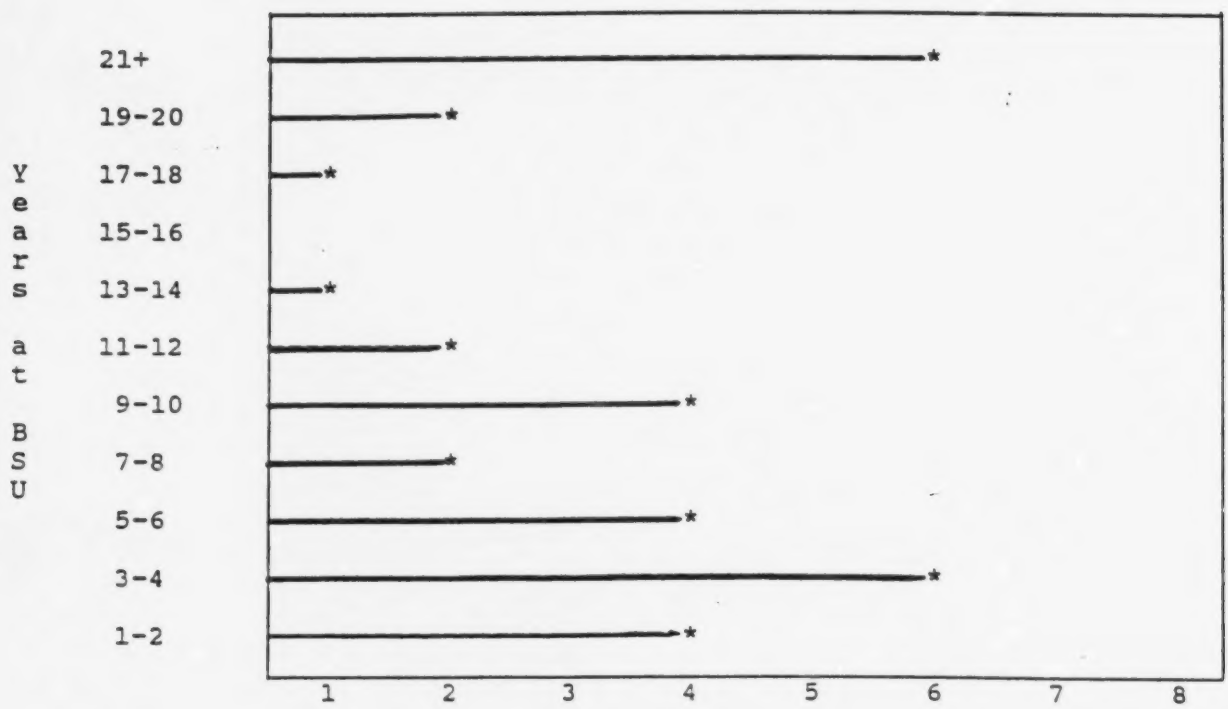


TABLE 8. Years In Same Job Title

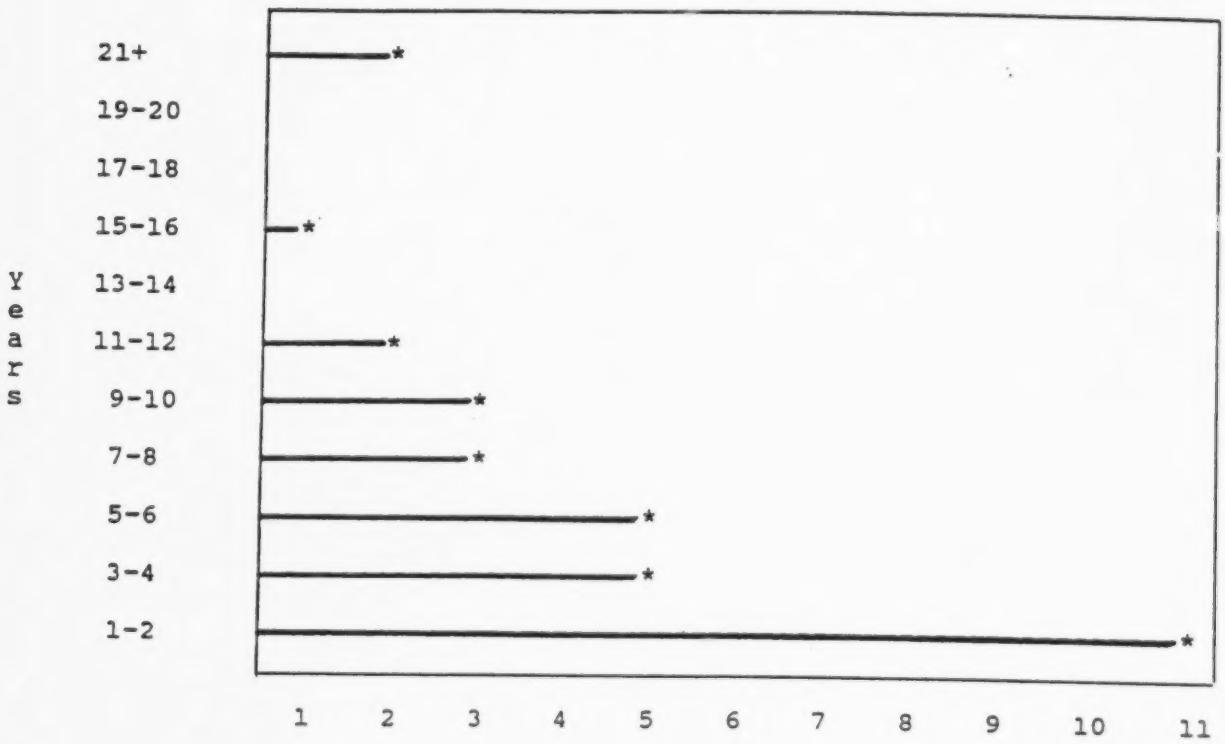
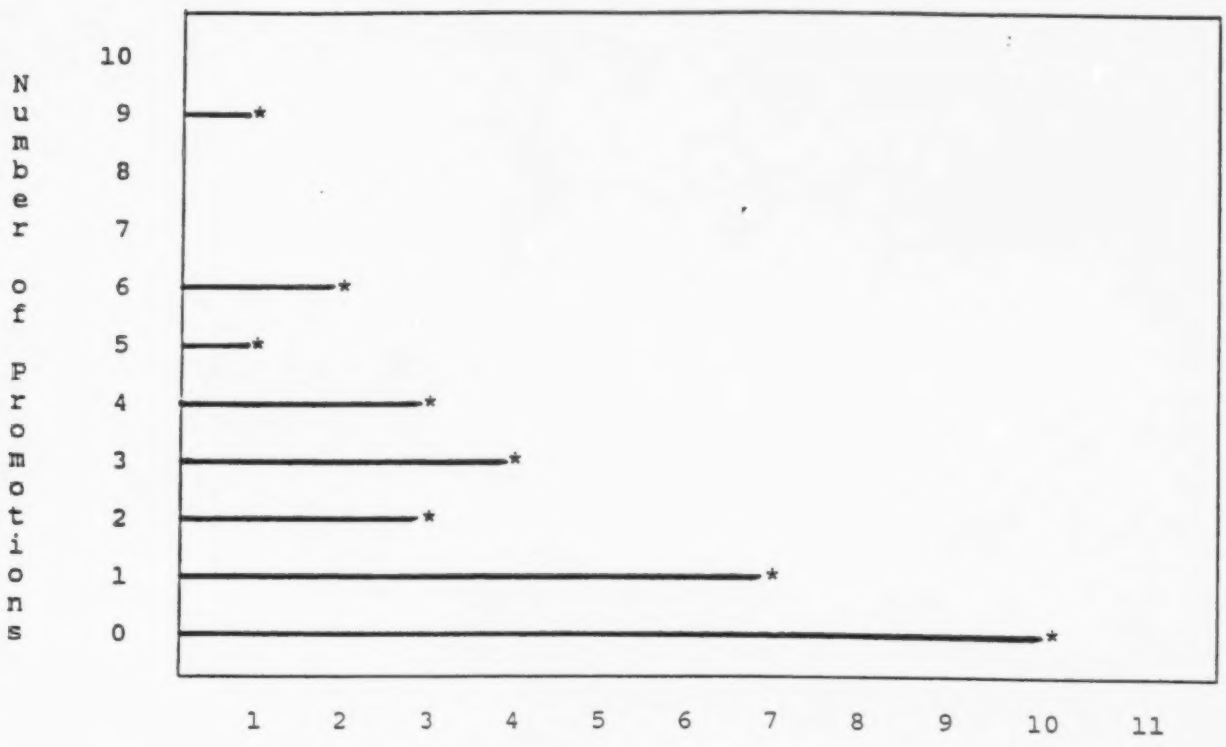


TABLE 9. Number of Promotions



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